U.S. COAST GUARD STATION HUMBOLDT BAY AND MARINE RAILWAY
200 New Navy Base Road, east shore of the north spit of Humboldt Bay
Samoa vicinity
Humboldt County
California

HABS CA-2810
HABS CA-2810

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay And Marine Railway **HABS No. CA-2810**
Near South End of New Navy Base Road
Samoa
Humboldt County
California

Location: 200 New Navy Base Road, east shore of the north spit of Humboldt Bay, four miles south of Samoa, Humboldt County, California

Present owner: United States Coast Guard
Headquarters
2100 Second Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20593-001

Present use: United States Coast Guard Station

Significance: The U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay and Marine Railway was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. The station's building and marine railway are significant under National Register Criteria A and C. The station is significant under Criterion A (association with significant events) due to its local significance as part of the life saving services and and its role in assisting navigation in the vicinity of Humboldt Bay. The building has significant associations with Chief Boatswain's Mate (Chief) Garner Churchill who commanded the station from its construction in 1937 to his retirement in 1966. During this period, the station saved the lives of more than 300 people, according to maritime historian Ralph Shanks. U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay is significant under Criterion C (embodies the distinctive characteristics of type, period or method of construction) because it is considered the best example in the western United States of the 'Roosevelt Style,' a Colonial Revival Style station design used nationally for Coast Guard stations from the 1920s to the late 1940s. The style was named for the Franklin Roosevelt administration, the period when stations in this style were primarily built. In his book, *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard*, Ralph Shanks states that Coast Guard buildings of this period ". . . represented the highest achievement in Coast Guard architecture, one not equaled to this day" (pg. 207). Shanks further indicates that the Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station is ". . . the apex of

Coast Guard architecture" and the finest example in the United States of a station from this period (*Lighthouses and Lifeboats on the Redwood Coast,* pg. 185; personal communication with Ward Hill, October 22, 2009). The quality of the station's architectural detailing (door, window, porch moldings, decorative ironwork, porch brackets, etc.) is especially fine and the building exterior retains a high level of historic integrity.

U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay also retains one of the few surviving marine railways (which transported boats from the station to the water for launching) within the Coast Guard. First built in the early 20th century, marine railways became obsolete as the Coast Guard changed over to larger steel lifeboats in the 1970s. The only other marine railway in California is at the Point Reyes Station, now part of the Point Reyes National Seashore and no longer an operating Coast Guard station (Ralph Shanks, personal communication with Ward Hill, October 22, 2009).

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** The original plans are dated February, 1936. The building was occupied in January, 1937.

2. **Architect:** U.S. Coast Guard, Civil Engineer's Office, Washington, D.C.

3. **Original and subsequent owners:** 1936-present: U.S. Coast Guard

4. **Builder, contractor, suppliers:** Fred J. Maurer & Sons

5. **Original plans and construction:** The original construction cost of the Coast Guard Station was $78,000.[1]

Exterior: The station has a T-shaped plan and a tripartite composition: a central section with east and west symmetrically arranged dormers and flanking Colonial Revival Style 'houses' (facing north and south with symmetrical facades) joined to the central block. Each 'house' or side wing has a full first floor entrance porch with columns and balustrade balcony, and three evenly spaced second floor windows below three roof dormers.

East Façade

The east façade of the center section has three first floor roll-up doors opening into the original boat room leading to the launch way ramps down to Humboldt Bay. Located above the second roll-up door was a sign identifying the building: "U.S. Coast Guard, Humboldt Bay Station." Above the first floor roll-up doors are three symmetrically arranged second floor gables each with a pair of double-hung windows.

The center section has flanking gabled wings on the north and the south. The gabled wings are mirror images of each other, symmetrically arranged windows with a door (on the right or left side of the first floor) below a small gabled entrance porch.

West Façade

The west façade of the center section has a single-story center area, forming the stem of the T-shape, projecting out 28' from the main building. Original 1936 drawings show the center projection had two

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[1] Susie Van Kirk, "United States Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay - Historical Background," February, 1977, page 11. Unpublished Report on File, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Coast Headquarters, Alameda, California.

roll-up doors that opened into a garage. Between the two roll-up doors were three centered double-hung windows with shutters. Located above the three center windows was a sign identifying the building: "U.S. Coast Guard, Humboldt Bay Station." The upper portion of the roll-up doors had rows of glass panels with wood panels below. Located at the top center of each roll-up door was the Coast Guard Insignia flanked by wood panels. Above the first floor center area are three, second floor gables. The center gable has three double-hung windows while the flanking side gables each have a pair of double-hung windows.

On the west façade of the center section, there are flanking gabled wings on the north and the south. Both of the wings had central entrances below projecting gabled roofs but differ in window arrangements.

The north wing had double-hung windows that flank the entrance door. The second floor had three evenly spaced double hung windows and the third floor had a round arch double-hung window below the main gable. All the windows had shutters.

The first floor of the south wing had a pair of smaller single-hung windows without shutters on the left of the entrance and a single double-hung window with shutters on the right. The second floor has two pairs of double-hung windows with one set of shutters per pair. A round arch double-hung window is below the main gable

North and South Façades

The north and south façades are identical with the exception of the first floor window arrangement. Both façades have identical Neo-classical entrance porches. The raised scored concrete porches are set on concrete piers at the corners and flanking the center porch stair. Wood latticework was installed between each pier. Four concrete steps lead up to each porch floor. The stairs have a wrought iron railing. Pairs of Doric columns flank the stairs and support the flat porch roofs. Three additional Doric columns support the corners of the porch roof with each column set on a plinth. A single square column supports the porch roof near the building wall. Tongue and groove siding covers the porch ceiling. A perimeter wrought iron porch railing connects the two pairs of front and the side columns. An abstract design based on the Coast Guard insignia is at the center of each of the four sections of the porch railing. The flat, metal covered porch roof has a wood balustrade with larger square posts above each porch column. The center of the porch roof balustrade repeats the Coast Guard insignia present on the porch railing.

The north and south façades each have small ancillary porches on the east and west. The east porches are projecting small gable porch roofs (covered with wood shingles) with a segmental arches and architrave cornices below. The east porch is on the left side of the first floor of the north wing and the right side of the south wing. Narrow round columns support the roof. The west porches are raised on a concrete base. Five concrete steps with a wrought iron railing lead up to the south wing porch on the west.

The center section of the north and south façades are identical, each had two double-hung windows with shutters and an entrance door with a transom window above it.

Watch Tower

Projecting above the roof ridge is the watch tower. The watch tower is 10' by 10' and it is 7' 6" tall up to the roof eaves. The watch tower has a hipped roof and a metal octagonal balcony around its perimeter.

Marine Railway

The marine railway was designed and built according to station's original 1936 plans (Sheet 29). The marine railway or boat launch ramp extends 274' east from the building's center roll-up doors (which originally opened into the boat room). The ramp has two steel 60-pound rail tracks set on 20 bents set on wooden pilings. Each of the 25' wide bents is supported by three wooden pilings spaced approximately 12' apart. The 20 bents with pilings are spaced 11' 10" apart from west to east. The 31' of ramp adjacent to the shore has wood plank decking under the track. Up the slope from wood plank decking, the tracks are set into reinforced concrete paving before they enter the station.

The two railways slope down into Humboldt Bay. The rails themselves are set on 10" by 12" wooden beams set on the bents. Each railway has two individual rails 5' 9"apart. A single set of rails is on the south and a double set of rails is on the north. One set of the northern rails curves to the north continuing to the northernmost opening into the boat room. The two rails to the south continue directly west to the middle or southern openings into the boat room. The rails begin to submerge in the water between the ninth and tenth bents, about 100' from the shore. According to the 1936 plans, the rails terminated at a point where they would have been approximately 7' under water at median low tide.

Flanking the tracks are two side walkways and a narrow center catwalk, both with 6" by 3" wood plank decking. Men on the walkways and the catwalk helped guide the boats into the water. The

center catwalk is about 18" wide and it extends out about 60' from the shore, supported by six wooden pilings. The walkway, initially about 3' wide, increases in width to about 5' at the eleventh bent to the east. Each walkway is constructed on 6" by 12" joists set on nine bents with flanking pairs of pilings spaced east to west 23' 9"apart. A horizontal cross brace holds the two pilings together.

Interior: From the 1936 plans, the original interior of the building had four floors including a basement. The south wing of the basement included a shop and drill room, storage and laundry room and in the north wing of the basement were a boiler room, a generator room, a provision (food storage) room, and a laundry room.

The T-shaped plan of the first floor included a storm clothes room, the kitchen and mess room on the north, the boat room and garage in the center, and the living quarters for the Officer-In-Charge on the south (living room, dining room, kitchen and office). The second floor has a central corridor through its length with nine bedrooms, a dayroom, and two bathrooms arranged on each side of the corridor. A small stair hall is located in the north and south wings of the second floor. The third (loft) floor includes a dormitory room on the north, the loft hall, storage room and closets in the center, and a storage space on the south. The watch room includes a single room accessed from a ladder leading up from the center of the third (loft) floor.

6. Alterations and Additions

Exterior: The west façade and the watch room were built according to the original plans but were later altered. The U.S. Coast Guard, 12th District, Civil Engineering office, designed the alterations to the building's exterior in 1977 (Rehabilitation Plans, 69 sheets, dated May 31, 1977 U.S. Coast Guard Civil Engineering, 12th District, San Francisco for the Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station). The plans are on file at U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay, Samoa, Humboldt County, California.

The other building façades have either no alterations or minor alterations from the original plans and construction.

The West Façade

The original roll-up doors (and Coast Guard insignias above the doors) and the center three double-hung windows (with the sign above the windows) were replaced as part of the 1977 remodel with an entrance porch that now serves as the main entrance to the building. The west porch replicates the architectural detailing of the north and south porches with its symmetrically arranged pairs of classical columns,

moldings and porch roof balustrade. Concrete steps lead up to the concrete porch floor and a wrought iron balustrade (the Coast Guard Insignia) connects between the columns. The single hinged entrance door has a nine pane window over four panels below. The entrance door has flanking ten over ten, wood-sash double-hung windows with inset panels below replicating the windows seen next to entrance door on the south porch. Six over six, wood sash, double-hung windows flank the entrance porch on the west.

The north and south side wings have small ancillary porches on the west façades. These porches were also altered in 1977. The west porches are raised on a concrete base. Five concrete steps with a wrought iron railing lead up to the south wing porch on the west. The original steps have been removed from the north wing porch and a modern handicapped access ramp now leads up to the porch door. The west facade porch on both the north and south originally had a center projecting gable roof (supported by over-scaled decorative brackets) with flanking windows. The porches were expanded to the side with a cross gable over the rectangular concrete porch floor. A second door to the porch was added to the right or left of the original porch door.

The East, North and South Façades

The east, north and south façades, built according to the original 1936 plans, have largely remained unaltered. The only alterations to the north and south façades are the removal of the original shutters adjacent to the three second floor windows. The east façade has not been altered from the original design.

Watch Tower

The original tripartite windows on the north and south of the watch tower have been removed and replaced with large anodized aluminum frame windows. The original windows on the east have been replaced with an anodized aluminum frame sliding glass door. The original door and the top half of the wall on the west side of the watch tower have been removed and replaced with anodized aluminum frame windows with a wall below matching the windows on the south and north.

Marine Railway

The marine railway has not received any major alterations since its original construction date. The handrails on the walkways of the marine railway were added later; they are not shown on the original plans, nor are they visible in historic views of the marine railway. The date of their construction is not known, but they appear to date from the last 40 years. It is likely that repair and replacement of certain

structural members (pilings and bents) occurred during the period when the marine railway was operating (1937 to the late 1970s).

Interior: The station's interior was extensively altered as part of the 1977 remodeling. The U.S. Coast Guard, 12th District, Civil Engineering office, designed the alterations to the building's interior. The rehabilitation plans (69 sheets, dated May 31, 1977 U.S. Coast Guard Civil Engineering, 12th District, San Francisco for the Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station) are on file at U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay, Samoa, Humboldt County, California.

a. Basement

The north and south basement areas have not been altered. The original spatial configuration and interior doors are extant.

b. First Floor

Central Section: The main 1977 alteration to the interior remodeled the first floor central space (the original boat room and garage) into a reception area, offices and classrooms. None of the original finishes survive.

South Wing: The spaces for the original living room (now a drafting room) and office for the Station's Officer-In-Charge are extant although the interior finishes have been remodeled. The original dining room and kitchen have been extensively altered and combined to create an office. The large opening from the dining room into the living room has been closed off.

The North Wing: The original kitchen and mess room have been extensively remodeled. None of the original finishes survive. The storm clothes room is now a hallway connecting to an exterior door on the west. The stair to the second floor is still extant.

c. Second Floor

Central Section: The walls separating the four bedrooms and the original dayroom have been removed to create a large recreation room.

South Wing: The walls separating Bedrooms Two and Three have been removed. The bathroom at the end of the central section has been moved to the west where there was originally a stair. The original Bedroom One has been reconfigured incorporating the hall and bathroom spaces.

North Wing: The central hall was removed, the bedroom spaces reconfigured and the bathroom has been completely remodeled with new fixtures and finishes.

d. Third Floor

Central Section: The loft stair hall (with built-in closets), the loft hall and the storage room are still extant. A modern wooden stair now joins the loft stair hall with the watch tower.

South Wing: The open storage space in the south wing has not been altered.

North Wing: The dormitory space in the north wing has been subdivided into two bedrooms, one on the east and the other on the west.

e. Watch Tower

The interior has been remodeled with a built-in desk on the south, west and north walls. The east wall is now a modern sliding glass door.

B. Historical Context

The History of Humboldt Bay

Various expeditions explored the California coast for a harbor beginning with Cabrillo in 1543 but none ever entered Humboldt Bay. The narrow channel into the bay, the sand dune spits separating the bay from the ocean and the often heavy fog in the area obscured the entrance into the bay. English, Russians and Americans explored the California Coast seeking a harbor from which they could control the lucrative fur trade of the Pacific Northwest. A group of fur-seal hunters with the Russian American Company entered the bay in 1806, but never established a settlement.[2] Humboldt County lies north of the area settled during the Spanish and Mexican Periods of California. The northernmost mission was in Sonoma. Mexican land grants on the California north coast reached as far north as the Ukiah Valley in Mendocino County.

The discovery of gold brought 200,000 men to California in 1848-49. The first gold discovery was on the American River in January, 1848, attracting prospectors to the Sierra Foothills from Coloma to Mariposa. Gold was subsequently discovered on the Trinity River in July, 1848 and by 1849 prospectors en masse also moved to this area. Supplying the Trinity River miners by overland routes from Sacramento involved a long and arduous journey up the Central Valley. In November, 1849, Josiah Gregg and Lewis Wood led a party of early American explorers who attempted to find a river transportation route to the Trinity River (which they thought flowed into the Pacific Ocean at Trinidad Bay). Instead, they discovered Humboldt Bay while traveling west from what is today Trinity County. The Gregg-Wood expedition explored the Arcata area at the

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2 Susie Van Kirk, "United States Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay - Historical Background," February, 1977, page 2. Unpublished Report on File, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Coast Headquarters, Alameda, California.

north end of Humboldt Bay with the help of members of the Weott Indians (the earliest human inhabitants near Humboldt Bay) in December, 1849.[3]

In spring 1850, the schooner *Laura Virginia,* led by Elias Howard and Captain Douglass Ottinger of the United States Revenue-Marine, sailed to the Humboldt coast to locate the entrance to the bay, based on accounts from the Gregg-Wood expedition. San Francisco investors financed the venture with the ultimate goal of establishing a depot to distribute goods to the miners in Trinity County. Their objective was to discover the mouth of the Trinity River in the vicinity of Humboldt Bay. Unbeknownst to them, the Trinity River joins with the Klamath River in the mountains. The crew nevertheless traveled north and discovered the opening channel to Humboldt Bay. The *Laura Virginia* entered Humboldt Bay in April 1850. The expedition searched for suitable settlement sites and named the bay for the German naturalist, Baron von Humboldt. Ottinger made an official report noting the potential importance of the area as a future shipping port. Various other explorers, including Sam Brannan, followed Ottinger and made claims for various sites on the shores of Humboldt Bay.

The Brannan party founded the town of Eureka in May 1850. The towns of Eureka and Union (later Arcata) were laid out in 1850 along the southeast and north sides of Humboldt Bay.[4] Union, at first the dominant town and the County seat, served as a supply point for gold prospectors on the Klamath and Trinity rivers. Mining soon diminished and the lumber industry gained prominence. In 1856, the Humboldt County seat moved to Eureka. The Eureka port developed into one of the major lumber ports in the United States given its proximity to the substantial redwood and fir forests of the north coast. The first successful sawmill - the Ryan and Duff Mill in Eureka - began operation in 1852. The mill machinery was shipped on a steamer from San Francisco. By 1854, Eureka had seven operating sawmills.

Strategically located, Humboldt Bay continues to be the only shipping point for large vessels between San Francisco and Coos Bay, Oregon.[5] The narrow channel (only 0.25 miles wide for some distance) into Humboldt Bay has always presented hazards for ships. Three tidal currents meet at the channel entrance. A curved bar of sand which constantly changes obstructs the entrance channel to Humboldt Bay. In addition, the harbor had problems with rough weather, fog and

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3 Evelyn McCormick, *Little Grains of Sand - A History of the North Peninsula* (Rio Dell:Evelyn McCormick, 1989), 6.

4 Humboldt Bay has been described as shaped like a pear - it is 20 miles in length while its width varies from a mile to 8 miles. Its total surface area is approximately 17,000 acres. The sand ridge between the bay and the ocean breaks the force of storms coming over the ocean. The Bay was originally fairly shallow in depth, i.e., 10 to 30' at Eureka.

5 Ralph C. Shanks and Wick York, *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard* (San Anselmo:Costano Books, 1996), 155.

winds. During the winter months, ships stayed in the bay for up to a month waiting for suitable conditions for passage.[6]

Despite problems navigating the Humboldt Bay channel, streamers loaded with lumber made regular runs to San Francisco, southern California and the South Pacific. During the 1870s and 1880s approximately 800 ships a year entered Humboldt Bay.[7] Given this level of maritime activity, marine disasters followed with 23 vessels destroyed at the Humboldt Bay channel between 1850 and 1878.[8] In 1889, Eureka was the fifth busiest port on the Pacific Coast.[9] Eureka, in spite of its isolation, became northern California's major commercial center north of San Francisco. By the late 19th century, Humboldt Bay ranked second on the Pacific Coast for ship building.[10] By 1910, 928 cargo ships and about 18,000 passengers arrived by steam ships in Humboldt Bay.[11] Some thought the Eureka harbor would rival those of San Francisco and Seattle.

In the 20th century, competing modes of transportation led to a decline in ship traffic on Humboldt Bay. In October, 1914, the Northwestern Pacific Railroad provided a rail link south from Eureka and Arcata to San Francisco. The construction of the Redwood Highway (State Route 101 was completed between 1924 and 1926) marked a significant shift in Humboldt County from ocean and rail transportation to travel by automobile and truck. In recent years the lumber and fishing industries have declined considerably reducing boat traffic on Humboldt Bay. The area's economy is today largely based on services, education and tourism.

The U.S. Coast Guard and Navigation on Humboldt Bay

To prevent loss of life and property as a result of the many navigational hazards at the entrance to Humboldt Bay, the Federal Government has provided navigational aids in the Bay. Humboldt Bay had what was considered to be the most

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6 Susie Van Kirk, "United States Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay - Historical Background," February, 1977, page 40. Unpublished Report on File, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Coast Headquarters, Alameda, California.

7 Wallace Elliot, *History of Humboldt County* (San Francisco:W.W. Elliott, 1881), 130.

8 Susie Van Kirk, "United States Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay - Historical Background," February, 1977, page 4. Unpublished Report on File, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Coast Headquarters, Alameda, California.

9 Wallace Martin, *Sail & Steam on the Northern California Coast 1850-1900* (San Francisco:National Maritime Museum Association, 1983), 52.

10 Wallace Martin, *Sail & Steam on the Northern California Coast 1850-1900* (San Francisco:National Maritime Museum Association, 1983), 104.

11 Wallace Martin, *Sail & Steam on the Northern California Coast 1850-1900* (San Francisco:National Maritime Museum Association, 1983), 200.

dangerous harbor entrance in California. [12] The narrow channel (only 1/4 mile wide for some distance) with changing tidal currents (three tidal currents meet at the channel entrance) and shifting sand bars into Humboldt Bay has always presented hazards for ships. In addition, the harbor had problems with rough weather, fog and winds.

The federal government's early role in directing navigation on Humboldt Bay began with the construction of the Humboldt Harbor Lighthouse in 1856. Congress appropriated $15,000 for the lighthouse in 1851. The lighthouse was located on the spit midway between the bay and the ocean and located about three-quarters of a mile from the channel into Humboldt Bay. The light, which burned vegetable oil, was at the top of a 53-foot tall lighthouse structure. A Cape Cod style dwelling was built at the base of the tower. The first keeper was J. Johnson.[13] After his death in 1859, Mr. Johnson's wife Sarah operated the lighthouse until 1863. The illumination from the lighthouse was considered to be too low in the heavy fog and the shifting sands of the site endangered the building's stability. A search for alternative sites began in the late 1860s. Damaged by earthquakes in 1877 and 1882 and a flood in 1885, the first lighthouse was eventually abandoned in 1892.

In addition to the lighthouse, various navigational aids guided ships through fog at the Humboldt Bay channel. A bell boat, a 300 pound bell on a 30 foot boat, was acquired in 1872 as a fog signal. A fog whistle was added two years later. A fog-signal station on the north side of the Humboldt Bay channel opened in 1908 with Mr. George Cobb as keeper. A group of bungalow cottages housing the families of the keeper and the assistant keeper were built near the fog station. None of these buildings survive today. During the early 20th century, the families of the fog station personnel lived near the station but the keepers lived at the station.

Four miles to the south of the first lighthouse, the second lighthouse and an attached fog signal began operating on October 31, 1892 on the north spit at Table Bluff. A keeper's house, a duplex and a fog signal building was attached to the square lighthouse. The new location on a 165-foot high bluff would be visible from a greater distance. The Fresnel lens in the old lighthouse was transferred to the new Table Bluff Light Station.[14] For several years the old lighthouse was used by the United States Life-Saving Station as a lookout tower. The old lighthouse was eventually abandoned; the tower collapsed in 1933.

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12 Ralph C. Shanks and Janetta T. Shanks, *Lighthouses and Lifeboats on the Redwood Coast* (San Anselmo:Costano Books, 1978), 177.

13 Evelyn McCormick, *Little Grains of Sand - A History of the North Peninsula* (Rio Dell:Evelyn McCormick, 1989), 10 and www.lighthousefriends.com/light.asp?ID=871 (September 2009).

14 The Coast Guard deactivated the Table Bluff Lighthouse in 1975. The lighthouse building (the dwellings and related structures had been demolished) was moved to Eureka's Woodley Island Marina in 1987 and the lighthouse's Fresnel lens is now on display at the Humboldt Bay Maritime Museum in Samoa, California (www.lighthousefriends.com/light.asp?ID=62 (September 2009).

Humboldt Bay and the United States Life-Saving Service

The oldest Coast Guard precursor was the United States Revenue-Marine (Revenue Cutters Service) created by legislation signed by President George Washington in 1790. Congress created the Revenue Cutters to enforce tariffs on imported goods, but the service later provided aid to distressed ships in some areas. The rescue crews, however, in most parts of the country operated under a disorganized volunteer system that was largely ineffective in its life saving efforts. A serious effort to develop a paid professional life saving service began in 1871 when Congress appropriated $200,000 for the Treasury Department to use through its Revenue Cutter Service for life-saving objectives.

In June, 1878, Congress authorized the Life-Saving Service to establish well-managed and equipped paid crews dedicated to life saving efforts on the United States coastlines and the Great Lakes.[15] Twelve districts were administered by General Superintendant, Sumner I. Kimball (also head of the Revenue Cutter Service), appointed by President Rutherford B. Hayes. The Twelfth District of Life-Saving Stations served the Pacific Coast (California, Washington, Oregon and Alaska), the largest district in the service. The Life-Saving Service built stations only in areas with the most hazardous navigation conditions. Congress had authorized the establishment of a Life-Saving Station on Humboldt Bay in 1874.

The Life-Saving Service shared responsibility for assisting navigation and protecting life and property on Humboldt Bay with another federal agency, the Lighthouse Service. President Woodrow Wilson consolidated the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service and the U.S. Life-Saving Service to create the Coast Guard in 1915. The U.S. Coast Guard took over the Humboldt Bay Station in 1915, retaining much of the same crew.[16] Under the original legislation, the Coast Guard operated under the Department of the Treasury, although it would be transferred to the Department of the Navy in wartime. President Roosevelt consolidated the Coast Guard with the U.S. Lighthouse service in 1939. The Coast Guard was transferred from the Treasury Department to the Department of Transportation in 1967.

The Humboldt Bay Life-Saving Station, the second in California following the construction of one in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, was finally operating by

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15 The Revenue Cutter Service and the Lighthouse Service along with private tugboat and pilot boat crews participated in rescues of shipwrecks. The Life-Saving Service stations had an important role in developing a more formal network of navigation aids in the United States. The stations, located near sites where ships frequently stranded and of shipwrecks, provided warning signals for ships coming dangerously close to shore.

16 John A. Tilley, *The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary: A History 1939-1999* (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Coast Guard, 2003), 3.

November, 1878.[17] The Humboldt Bay station was one of only eight built by 1889 on the Pacific Coast.[18] The Life-Saving Service station was located on a site adjacent to the north side of the Coast Station extant today.

The Station primarily task was to rescue stranded and wrecked ships at the Humboldt Bay channel and to patrol the coast beaches.[19] In the early years of its operation, the Humboldt Bay Life-Saving Station had difficulties transporting boats from the boat house to the water because it lacked a railway, seriously impeding its rescue efforts (a railway was eventually built by the 1890s).[20]

The Humboldt Bay Station Life-Saving Station had a keeper and six volunteers to man the lifeboat and rescue equipment. Later, full time paid 'surfmen' lived at the station and the entire crew took to the lifeboats to undertake rescues when needed. The men patrolled the beach along a regular route from one key post to the next. The station often housed rescue victims for days. In 1879 money was appropriated for dredging the channel and Humboldt Bay. By 1896, the Humboldt Station had eight surfmen working a six-day week. In 1901, telephone connections were installed at the station.

Historical Background: Lifeboats and the Marine Railway

The development of marine railways at select United States Life-Saving Service stations and later at Coast Guard Stations is directly related to the size and weight of surfboats and lifeboats used for rescues. The Life-Saving Service used primarily surfboats before the 20th century. Surfboats have a lighter weight, and are smaller with a shallower draft than lifeboats. The boats were 23' to 27' in length and weighed from 700 to 1,100 pounds. The surfmen pulled the surfboats by hand or with boat cart from the land to water. The boats were specially designed to be hand launched by surfmen from the beach.[21] Since lifeboats were

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17 Seven Life Saving Stations, including Humboldt Bay, were eventually built in California (Arena Cove, Point Reyes, Point Bonita, Fort Point, Golden Gate Park and Southside (Ocean Beach at Sloat Boulevard in San Francisco). The Life Saving Service eventually built a total of 20 stations on the Pacific Coast. Ralph C. Shanks and Wick York, *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard* (San Anselmo:Costano Books, 1996), 208.

18 The Humboldt Bay Life-Saving Station was the fourth on the Pacific Coast, built after the two Washington State stations at Shoalwater Bay and Neah Bay and the Golden Gate Park Station in San Francisco. The Bolinas Bay Station burned a few years after its construction. In 1889, the Life-Saving Service built stations at Pt. Reyes, Fort Point, San Francisco and Pt. Adams, Oregon (personal communication with Ralph Shanks, December 14, 2009).

19 Ralph C. Shanks and Janetta T. Shanks, *Lighthouses and Lifeboats on the Redwood Coast* (San Anselmo:Costano Books, 1978), 160.

20 Susie Van Kirk, "United States Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay - Historical Background," February, 1977, page 6. Unpublished Report on File, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Coast Headquarters, Alameda, California.

21 Ralph C. Shanks and Wick York, *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard* (San Anselmo:Costano Books, 1996), 104.

longer, about 29' to 34' in length, and heavier (up to 4,000 pounds), they were usually launched by a marine railway.[22]

In 1907, Charles H. McLellen designed a 36-foot long motor lifeboat destined to be the most successful wooden motor lifeboat ever built.[23] The boats were powered by a 35 to 40 horsepower engine and capable of speeds up to 10 knots. The first 36-foot motor lifeboat used by the Life-Saving Service was at Waaddah Island at Neah Bay, Washington in 1908. The first power driven boat was received for Humboldt Bay Station use in 1910, but oar-propelled surfboats continued to be in active use for many more years. Several classifications of the 36-foot lifeboat were subsequently developed and they had a long period of service with the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard built wooden, 36-foot, motor lifeboats at their Curtis Bay, Baltimore, Maryland facility until 1956. The last one was retired at Depoe Bay, Oregon in 1987.[24]

The Pacific Coast region would eventually have a higher percentage of motor lifeboats than any other region because the rescues often involved traveling long distances in rough surf. The Great Lakes became the 'premier' lifeboat area since it had deep water and protected areas easily adapted for marine rail launch ways. Winter conditions in this area also require boat storage on land because of ice. The northeastern Atlantic Coast stations often had marine railways for launching because of the significant rise and fall of the tides; however, some areas did not have them because the water was too shallow near the shoreline. Some early Pacific Coast Life Saving stations, like the ones at Golden Gate Park and the Southside Station at Ocean Beach in San Francisco, where a marine railway could not be built because of heavy pounding surf, were abandoned. The stations in more protected areas at Fort Point in San Francisco and Point Reyes used marine railways.[25]

By the 1920s, the marine railway had become a common feature of Coast Guard stations. Maritime historian Timothy Dring identifies the marine railway for launching boats directly into the water at protected locations such as harbor

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22 The length of the marine railway ramp varied from station to station depending on local topography and the near shore water depths. Generally a slope of about 3/8 inch per linear foot was installed in the boathouse proper, followed by a one and a eighth inch linear foot slope outside of the boathouse down to the water's edge. This arrangement provided sufficient downward travel of a boat on its cradle. One advantage of storing the boats on shore was the ease of repair and maintenance of the below waterline areas of the boat. William D. Wilkinson and Timothy R. Dring, *American Coastal Rescue Craft* (Gainseville:University of Florida Press, 2009), Appendix B).

23 Ralph C. Shanks and Wick York, *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard* (San Anselmo:Costano Books, 1996), 109.

24 Ralph C. Shanks and Wick York, *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard* (San Anselmo:Costano Books, 1996), 113.

25 Ralph Shanks, personal communication, October 22, 2009.

entrances, inlets and coves as one the "design hallmarks" of the "Roosevelt Style" Coast Guard stations of the 1930s and 1940s. The bright white painted station houses and boathouses, along with the typical motor lifeboat and surfboat on the ramp, served for many years as the well-recognized symbol of the coastal rescue mission of the Coast Guard.[26]

The marine railways became obsolete when the Coast Guard switched in the 1970s to much larger 44-foot long steel lifeboats. The 44-foot boats, too large and heavy to haul from a boat house station, were stored in separate boat houses built over the water. The 36-foot boats adapted to the marine railways have been phased out. Consequently, the marine railways have largely been removed from Coast Guard stations throughout the United States. Humboldt Bay is the only operating United States Coast Guard Station on the Pacific Coast with an extant marine railway.[27]

Marine Disasters and the Humboldt Bay Station

The Life Saving Service shared responsibility for protecting life and property with the lighthouse crews (separate from the Life Saving Service). The Life Saving Service rescued many people in marine disasters on the bay including 96 passengers and the crew of the passenger steamer *Corona* in 1907. A mistaken command sent the ship aground at the north jetty to Humboldt Bay. Two surfmen in the lifeboat sent from the Life Saving Station died because of the rough seas and high tide. When the tide went down, the crew working under Captain Hennig brought all 96 passengers and the 60-man crew safely ashore.[28]

One of the most famous marine rescues was saving the crew of the H-3 submarine in December 14, 1916. The Navy submarine with a crew of 27 and eight live torpedoes ran aground 200 yards offshore near the entrance to Humboldt Bay. A poisonous gas began filling the submarine as a result of the crash. The station crew had to run a lifeboat out to the submarine in rough surf to secure a breeches buoy from the ship to the shoreline. With the rope secured, the crew was able to save all the men on the submarine, transporting them along the line to the shore. The cruiser *U.S.S. Milwaukee* was dispatched to recover the H-3 submarine on January 13, 1917. Because of the channel's shifting currents, the *U.S.S.*

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26 William D. Wilkinson and Timothy R. Dring, *American Coastal Rescue Craft* (Gainseville:University of Florida Press, 2009), Appendix B.

27 The National Park Service has recently restored the marine railway at the historic Point Reyes Station (now used as a conference center at the Point Reyes National Seashore, it is no longer an operating Coast Guard Station) (Personal communication with Ralph Shanks, October 22, 2009). According to maritime historian Timothy Dring, the Canadian Coast Guard has an operating marine railway used for motorized inflatable craft at its Bamfield, British Columbia station (personal communication, November 16, 2009).

28 Susie Van Kirk, "United States Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay - Historical Background," February, 1977, page 19. Unpublished Report on File, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Coast Headquarters, Alameda, California.

Milwaukee became stranded a short distance from the submarine. The Life Saving Service had to employ three lifeboats to safely remove the 421 enlisted men and the 17 officers on the ship. A local firm eventually salvaged the H-3.[29]

A notable rescue by the crew of Chief Garner Churchill was saving the crew of the yacht *Rena* in 1939. On June 23, 1939, Surfman Karl L. Carios on lookout duty spotted the yacht *Rena* near the Humboldt bar and saw she was in difficulty. He immediately alerted Chief Churchill, who with a crew of four headed a 36-foot lifeboat toward the yacht, now largely under water. The closer Churchill approached *Rena,* the more he was hampered by the debris breaking off the vessel and by the fact that he had to reduce his speed below steerage. In a feat of great seamanship, the Chief and his crew managed to safely remove the four people from *Rena.* The Coast Guard offered Churchill the Gold Life Saving Medal and his crew the Silver, but the Chief refused to accept any higher medal than his crew received and thus all received the Silver Medal, the second highest award for lifesaving.

The New Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station

In 1936, the Coast Guard built the Humboldt Bay Station extant today to replace the considerably smaller now obsolete station built by the Life Saving Service in the 19th century. Replacing the Humboldt Bay Station was part of a national effort to upgrade Coast Guard facilities during the Franklin Roosevelt administration through the Works Project Administration (WPA). The new Coast Guard buildings were major public works projects providing work for unemployed construction workers and craftsmen. Fred J. Maurer and Sons were the contractors of the Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station[30]. The first Officer-In-Charge at the new station was Chief Garner Churchhill. Erected at a cost of $78,000 with $40,000 in new equipment, the building was one of the last traditional lifeboat stations in the United States and a unique structure on the West Coast. The noted maritime historian Ralph Shanks considers the building to be "the apex of Coast Guard architecture."[31]

Maritime historian Ralph Shanks has identified the period of the so-called 'Roosevelt Style' stations (named for their primary construction period during

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29 Susie Van Kirk, "United States Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay - Historical Background," February, 1977, page 10. Unpublished Report on File, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Coast Headquarters, Alameda, California.

30 Susie Van Kirk, "United States Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay - Historical Background," February, 1977, page 10. Unpublished Report on File, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Coast Headquarters, Alameda, California.

31 Ralph C. Shanks and Janetta T. Shanks, *Lighthouses and Lifeboats on the Redwood Coast* (San Anselmo:Costano Books, 1978), 185 and Ralph Shanks, personal communication with Ward Hill, October 22, 2009.

Franklin Roosevelt's presidency) of the 1920s to the 1940s as clearly the high point of Coast Guard architecture.

> The Coast Guard's lasting monuments of the period of the 1920s through the early 1940s were the magnificent neocolonial lifeboat stations constructed during the period. These represented the highest achievement in Coast Guard architecture, one not equaled to this day. These red roofed, gleaming white buildings symbolized the best of the Coast Guard and are national treasures. World War II changed the lifeboat stations and made them military in character. During the 1950s, Coast Guard architecture declined in grandeur and lost its distinctive features. Sadly, most Coast Guard stations built since the 1950s are architecturally indistinguishable from other functional structures.[32]

The station's construction was considered to be "exceedingly firm and sturdy" with the substantial wood frame tied together with steel and the walls insulated with wool.[33] The unique design of the Humboldt Bay Station incorporates Colonial Revival Style townhouses housing living and office spaces on the north and south, flanking the central boat room.[34]

The building served as quarters for the 25 man crew and the south end included the living quarters for the Officer-In-Charge, Chief G.J. Churchhill and his family. Churchill had worked at the Humboldt Bay Station since 1926. The building was specifically constructed to house a larger crew than had been serving the area.[35] A marine railway on a ramp to the bay led up to the central section of the station, the first floor boat room which housed three 36-foot lifeboats. The glass enclosed lookout above the center of the second floor assisted the old lookout tower nearby to the north. Soon after the new station was built, the adjacent old station was removed.

The U.S. Coast Guard Humboldt Bay Lifeboat Station had many challenges during the 1920s to the 1940s. The Coast Guard crew stopped rum runners on Humboldt Bay during Prohibition (1919-1933). They also saved many lives

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32 Ralph C. Shanks and Wick York, *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard* (San Anselmo:Costano Books, 1996), 207.

33 Susie Van Kirk, "United States Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay - Historical Background," February, 1977, page 11. Unpublished Report on File, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Coast Headquarters, Alameda, California.

34 According to maritime historian Ralph Shanks, the only Coast Guard Station in the United States similar to the Humboldt Bay Station is the Two Rivers Lifeboat Station in Wisconsin. Unlike the Humboldt Bay Station, the Two Rivers Lifeboat Station has had extensive alterations, including the removal of an original wing of the building (Ralph Shanks, personal communication, October 25, 2009).

35 "Coast Guard: Its historic role here," *The Humboldt Historian* (Crichton 19878), 8.

rescuing passengers on the three stranded schooners: the *Brooklyn*, the *Tiverton* and the *Yellowstone*. During World War II the Humboldt Bay Station was headquarters for Company C of the Twelfth Regiment, headquarters for the U.S. Coast Guard. The surveillance of the Pacific Coast was the Coast Guard's responsibility during World War II. Besides boat patrols, the Coast Guard patrolled the beaches day and night by horseback, jeep and on foot with dogs. Chief Churchill and his crew are credited with saving more than 300 lives during the 18 years he served at the 1938 Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station.[36]

After World War II, the fog station was closed and removed. A U.S. Coast Guard Air Station was commissioned in 1977 in McKinleyville north of Samoa. As part of a major remodeling project of the Humboldt Bay Station in 1978, the boat room was subdivided into offices, classrooms and a hallway. The station has barracks units to house about 33 personnel. A shop area in what was the boat room still opens out in back to the launch ramp. A new boat house was constructed north of the historic station in 1978. Today, the Humboldt Bay Lifeboat Station is one of 21 surf stations in the Coast Guard. The station continues to serve much of the coast of Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character

The U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay is considered to be the best example in the western United States of the Colonial Revival Style or 'Roosevelt Style' station, a standard building design used nationally by the Coast Guard. The size of the building is unusual and impressive. The building is a rare extant example of a Coast Guard Station that included the boat house in the station. In addition, the quality of its architectural detailing, such as the period exterior door and window moldings, classical columns, balustrades, gable brackets and ironwork, is especially fine. The building retains a high level of historic integrity on the exterior.

2. Condition of Fabric

The building is in excellent condition and well-maintained. The exterior was painted in 2008.

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[36] Ralph Shanks, personal communication with Ward Hill, October 22, 2009.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions

The building has a T-shaped plan with the main block measuring 103' by 36'. A center single-story extension (stem of the T) on the west facade measures 48' 2" by 28'.

2. Foundation

The building has a 10" wide perimeter reinforced concrete foundation. The interior columns are set on concrete footings 3' 6" wide and 1.5' deep. The original interior boat room also had a concrete slab floor.

3. Walls

The exterior walls are covered with wood shingles painted white. An architrave molding runs above the windows on the north and south façades of the single story western projection of the original boat room. A corner stone with the inscription 'AD 1936' is at the base of south pilasters framing the southernmost roll-up doors on the center east façade. Above the center roll-up door on the east façade is a sign identifying the building: "U.S. Coast Guard, Humboldt Bay Station."

4. Structural System and Framing

The perimeter wood-frame walls have 2" by 6" framing members. The ceiling joists and floor rafters are 2" by 10" or 2" by 12" wood planks. The ceiling joists over what was the center boat room are 2" by 12" steel I-beams. The original interior and perimeter columns in the boat room were 4" steel pipe filled with concrete.

5. Porches (*South and North Façades)*

The side wings have identical Neo-classical entrance porches facing north and south. The raised scored concrete porch is set on concrete piers at the corners and flanking the center porch stair. Wood latticework is installed between each pier. Four concrete steps lead up to the porch floor. The stairs have a wrought iron railing. Pairs of Doric columns flank the stairs and support the flat porch roof. Three additional Doric columns support the corners of the porch roof with each column set on a plinth. A single square column supports the porch roof near the building wall. Tongue and groove siding covers the porch ceiling. A perimeter wrought iron porch railing connects the two pairs of front and the side columns. An abstract design based on the Coast Guard insignia is at the center of each of the four sections of the porch railing. The flat, metal covered porch roof has a wood balustrade with larger square posts above each porch column. The center of the porch roof balustrade repeats the Coast Guard insignia present on the porch railing.

The north and south side wings have small ancillary porches on the east and west façades. The east façades of the north and south wings each have a projecting small gable porch roof (covered with wood shingles) with a segmental arch and an architrave cornice below. The east porch is on the left side of the first floor of the north wing and the right side of the south wing. Narrow round columns support the roof. The west porches are raised on a concrete base. Five concrete steps with a wrought iron railing lead up to the south wing porch on the west. The original steps have been removed from the north wing porch and a modern handicapped access ramp now leads up to the porch door. The west façade porch on both the north and south originally had a center projecting gable roof (supported by over-scaled decorative brackets) with flanking windows. The porches were later expanded to the side with a cross gable over the rectangular concrete porch floor. A second door to the porch was added to the right or left of the original porch door.

The 1978 entrance porch on the west serves as the main entrance to the building. The porch replicates the architectural detailing of the side porches with its classical columns and porch roof balustrade, although the columns are shorter and the porch railing appears larger in relation to the columns.

A narrow balcony is built around the perimeter of the octagonal base of the watch room at the center of the building. The balcony has a wrought iron railing with the same Coast Guard insignia present on the railings found on the north and south porches.

6. Chimneys

The side wings each have a brick chimney projecting up from the center of the west half of the roof gable. According to the 1936 plans, the south chimney is not functional (it was apparently included to maintain the symmetry between the north and south wings).

7. Openings

a. Doors

The doors on the north, south and west facades are single-hinged wooden doors with four vertically arranged panels below a fixed nine pane window. The doors on the east facade of the north and south side wings are solid, six panel doors. A segmental arch with a keystone encloses a fanlight above the door. The doors have sidelights with four lights and a single inset panel below. Narrow pilasters flank the sidelights.

The three center, wooden, roll-up doors on the east facade opened into the boat room. Only the door on the north is currently operative (currently opens into a shop area). The doors are approximately 12' wide and have three rows of seven windows divided vertically into

two lights. Below the three rows of windows are four rows of seven inset panels.

b. Windows

The most common window in the building is a wood-sash double-hung window with six lights over six (hereinafter referred to as the standard window).

Center Section: The west facade center section has three second floor dormers: the center dormer has three standard windows; the flanking dormers have two standard windows. The east façade of the center section has three second floor dormers each with a pair of standard windows. The side façades of the west extension each have three evenly spaced standard windows. The porch had wood-sash, double-hung windows with ten lights over ten flanking the entrance door.

North Wing: The porch has a standard window to the left of the door and a smaller six over six, wood-sash, double-hung, window on the right. Three standard windows are symmetrically arranged on the second floor. The third floor has three dormers with round arch windows with six lights over six.

The west façade of the north wing has a single standard window on the first floor. The second floor has three symmetrically arranged standard windows. The third floor has a single, wood-sash, centered round arch window (with a keystone) with six lights over six.

The east façade has two symmetrically arranged standard windows to the right of the door. The second floor has three symmetrically arranged standard windows. The third floor has a single, wood-sash, centered round arch window (with a keystone) with six lights over six.

Both the second and third floor windows on the east and west have louvered shutters with a decorative hold latch.

South Wing: The porch on the south has wood-sash, double-hung windows with ten lights over ten flanking the entrance door. Standard windows flank the central windows. Three standard windows are symmetrically arranged on the second floor. The third floor has three dormers with round arch windows with six lights over six.

The west façade of the south wing has a single standard window on the first floor to the right of the door. In contrast to the north wing, the second floor west façade has two symmetrically arranged pairs of standard windows. The third floor has a single, centered wood-sash round arch window (with a keystone) with six lights over six.

The east façade has two symmetrically arranged standard windows to the left of the door. The second floor has three symmetrically

arranged standard windows. The third floor has a single, wood-sash, centered round arch window (with a keystone) with six lights over six.

Both the windows on the east and west have louvered shutters with a decorative wrought iron hold latch.

Watch Tower: The north, south and east sides of the watch tower had a group of three vertical windows, each with two fixed panes. The larger center window has one 30" by 20" pane over another of the same size. The flanking windows have one over one, 18" by 20" panes. The exterior wall below the windows was covered with shingles. The original tripartite windows on the north and south of the watch room have been removed and replaced with large anodized aluminum frame windows. An anodized aluminum frame sliding glass door has replaced the original windows on the east. The original door and the top half of the wall on the west side of the watch room have been removed and replaced with anodized aluminum frame windows with a wall below matching the windows on the south and north.

8. Roof

The main central roof, a steep gable design covered with wood shingles, is painted red. The main central roof has three symmetrically placed gabled dormers on the east and west facades. The north and south side wings have steeply pitched cross gables covered with wood shingles perpendicular to the main gable. The side wings also have three symmetrically arranged gabled dormers on the north and south façades. The west single story extension has a flat roof. The roof has metal gutters and downspouts. The building has shallow roof eaves. The roof of the one-story extension on the west is flat.

Watch Tower: Projecting above the roof ridge is the watch tower. The watch tower is 10' by 10' in plan and 7' 6" tall from the floor to the roof eaves. The watch tower has a hipped roof and a metal octagonal balcony around its perimeter. The wrought iron balcony incorporates the Coast Guard insignia on each of its four sides. Projecting above the peak of the roof is a brass weather vane. The weather vane has the four letters for the cardinal directions (N, S, W and E) on connecting bars rotating on the stem. The top of the weather vane has what appears to be a profile of a ship at sea.

C. Description of Interiors

1. Floor Plans

The building has four levels, with the main operational functions on the first floor, bedrooms and recreational rooms on the second and the third floors and storage/utilities in the basement. The watch tower is a single small room on the fourth level.

a. Basement

The basement is divided into two separate sections below the north and south wings.

North Wing: The north basement rooms house utilities, provision room, and laundry.

South Wing: The south basement has a shop area with two small adjacent rooms on the east.

b. First Floor

Central Section: The large boat room originally occupied the large center space of the first floor. This space has been subdivided into offices, classrooms, hallways and a reception area.

South Wing: The two offices on the west and east flank the central drafting room. A stair on the north leads up to the second floor.

North Wing: A hallway connecting to a door on the west was originally a room for storm clothes storage. The mess room and kitchen spaces on the north are extant, although remodeled. A stair (with an adjacent stair hall) on the southeast corner of the north wing leads up to the second floor.

c. Second Floor

Central Section: The walls separating the second floor bedrooms four to seven and the dayroom have been removed creating one large recreational lounge space. A stair from this area leads up to the third floor.

South Wing: Two bedrooms are on the east and west and a bathroom is at the southwest corner.

South Wing: The two bedrooms are on the east and west sides of the north wing. The bathroom is at the northwest opening into the stair hall.

d. Third Floor

Central Section: The central section is a long rectangular area divided into a storage space (now a bedroom) on the south, the loft hall in the middle and loft closet on the north. A stair from the loft hall leads up to the watch tower.

South Wing: Two bedrooms occupy the south wing of the third floor.

North Wing: The north wing has a single space used for storage.

e. Watch Tower

The watch tower has a square interior space (10' by 10') with a shallow desk built into the wall on the south, north and west. The watch room walls are 7' 6" tall. A sliding door on the east opens out to the surrounding octagonal balcony.

2. Stairways

a. North and South Wing Basements

Separate wooden stairs lead down to the north and south basements.

b. North and South Wings First to Second Floor

The east porch of the north and south side wings opens into a stair hall providing access to the stairs to all levels. The wooden stairs from the first to the second floor continue up from the west to the east. The south stair has left and right tubular shaped wooden handrails set on a metal bracket screwed into a chair rail on the wall. The walls also have baseboards on each side of the steps. A balustrade runs adjacent to the stair opening in the second floor stair hall.

The north stairway has its original molded wooden handrail, turned balusters and a square newel post. The north stair has an oar for a right handrail. The oar handrail is also set on brackets screwed to a chair rail on the wall. The walls also have baseboards adjacent to the steps. The stairs lead up to a landing connecting to a second floor hallway. A second stair originally on the west in the north wing was removed and replaced with a bathroom in this area.

c. North and South Stairs, Second Floor to Third (Loft) Floor

The North and South Wings have wooden stairs joining the second floor to the third floor. Access to the north stairway is from the northeast corner of the second floor recreational room. The south stairway is located in the second floor stair hall. North and south stairs each continue up to the third floor in an enclosed space. Both stairways have left and right tubular shaped wooden handrails set on a metal bracket screwed into a chair rail on the wall. The walls also have baseboards next to each side of the steps.

d. Third Floor to Watch Tower

A steep new wooden stair leads up from the third floor center loft hall space to the watch tower. The original 1936 plans indicate that originally a wooden ladder with a tube steel railing led up to the watch tower.

3. Flooring

The original flooring is varnished hardwood floor and is visible only in the third floor (the storage room on the south and one bedroom in the north wing). The floors (now stained) appear to be made of Douglas fir. The original 1936 plans indicate the floors on the third floor were originally covered with linoleum. The other floors are covered by carpet.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish

The original walls are lath and plaster. The third floor rooms retain the original 4 ¼" wide chair rail and 6" baseboards. The chair rail and baseboards are likely Douglas fir. The walls of the later remodeling are drywall. The provision room in the north basement has a refrigeration unit enclosed with tongue and groove siding.

5. Openings

a. Doorways and Doors

The original interior doors had six panels. The two middle panels are square with the vertical rectangular shaped top and bottom panels. Simple plain boards with projecting base trim frame the doors. The doors and framing are painted white and are likely constructed of Douglas fir.

The original doors have largely been replaced with modern doors. The north basement provision room has its original door. A storeroom in the south basement also has an original door. The closets in the third floor loft hall have original doors. The third floor bedrooms on the north also have original doors, including two closet doors in the east bedroom.

b. Windows

Simple plain boards frame the exterior windows. The windows have a shallow sill. The round arch third floor windows in the north wing bedrooms have a wider sill with a trim molding below. The second and third floors have good natural lighting due to the many windows in the building.

6. Hardware

The original interior door and window hardware (including latches and door knobs, locks etc) have been replaced with modern hardware.

7. Mechanical Equipment

a. Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning

The original boilers for the steam heating still are extant in the basement on the north. A modern electrical system has been installed and electric baseboard heating has been added.

b. Lighting

The original lighting fixtures have been replaced with modern ceiling fluorescent lighting.

c. Plumbing

The plumbing system is standard gauge steel pipe.

D. Site

1. General Setting and Orientation

The U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay is located on a narrow, sand-dune covered peninsula north of the channel joining Humboldt Bay with the Pacific Ocean. The rectangular parcel of 46.5 acres is 800' north of the channel and on the west shore of Humboldt Bay. The Coast Guard Station is at the southern terminus of New Navy Base Road, south of Samoa, California. The boat launch ramp extended east from the building into Humboldt Bay.

2. Historic Landscape

A number of mature trees west of the station and the walkways date from the original construction. The seawall along the perimeter of Humboldt Bay east of the building was constructed in conjunction with the station. The extensive lawn adjacent to the building and the large paved parking lot on the west appear to date from the 1970s. These landscape features are not visible in early views of the site. The surrounding site is rolling grasslands and dune topography.

3. Outbuildings and Other Features

a. Marine Railway[37]

Operation of the Marine Railway

The lifeboats at the Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station would have originally been stored on a cart in the boat room at the central area of the first floor. Launching the boat involved lowering it down the railway to the water in a cart connected to a gasoline powered motor winch inside the building. Men on the walkways on each side of the rails would steady the boat on the cart with handling lines as it was lowered into the water. The boat was backed down the ramp so its

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[37] Maritime historians Ralph Shanks and Colin MacKenzie assisted in the description of how the marine railway operated at the Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station (personal communications with Ward Hill, October, 22, 2009).

motor entered the water first. The boat would float off the cart as the cart followed the rails into the water. When the boat returned, it was settled on the cart (posts on each side of the cart helped guide it) and the winch would pull the cart with the boat back to the boat room. Given that the Humboldt Bay Station had three rails for boats from the three-bay boat room connecting to double rails on the ramp, multiple boats could be launched from or returned to the boat room.

Description

The marine railway or boat launch ramp extends 274' east from the building's center roll-up doors (which originally opened into the boat room). The ramp has two steel 60-pound rail tracks set on 20 bents set on wooden pilings. Each of the 25' wide bents is supported by three wooden pilings spaced approximately 12' apart. The 20 bents with pilings are spaced 11' 10" apart from west to east. The 31' of ramp adjacent to the shore has wood plank decking under the track. After the wood plank decking, the tracks are set into reinforced concrete paving before they enter the station.

The two railways slope down into Humboldt Bay. The rails themselves are set on 10" by 12" wooden beams set on the bents. Each railway has two individual rails 5' 9"apart. A single set of rails is on the south and a double set of rails is on the north. One set of the northern rails curves to the north continuing to the northernmost opening into the boat room. The two rails to the south continue directly west to the middle or southern openings into the boat room. The rails begin to submerge in the water between the ninth and tenth bents, about 100' from the shore. According to the 1936 plans, the rails terminated at a point where they would have been approximately 7' under water at median low tide.

Flanking the tracks are two side walkways and a narrow center catwalk, both with 6" by 3" wood plank decking. Men on the walkways and the catwalk helped guide the boats into the water. The center catwalk is about 18" wide and it extends out about 60' from the shore, supported by six wooden pilings. The walkway, initially about 3' wide, increases in width to about 5' at the eleventh bent to the east. Each walkway is constructed on 6" by 12" joists set on nine bents with flanking pairs of pilings spaced east to west 23' 9"apart. A horizontal cross brace holds the two pilings together.

The handrails on the walkways were added later; they are not shown on the original plans, nor are they visible in historic views of the marine railway. The date of their construction is not known, but they appear to date from the last 30 years.

Modern Boat House and Warehouse

The separate boat house (built in 1978), used today for storing the station boats is adjacent to Humboldt Bay, northeast of the station. A warehouse built during World War II is to the northwest.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings

The original plans for the Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station are on file at the U.S. Coast Guard Civil Engineering Unit, Oakland, Alameda County, California and at the U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay, Samoa, Humboldt County, California. The rehabilitation plans (69 sheets, dated May 31, 1977 U.S. Coast Guard Civil Engineering, 12th District, San Francisco) for the Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Station are on file at U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay, Samoa, Humboldt County, California.

B. Historic Views

Historic views of the U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay are on file at the U.S. Coast Guard Civil Engineering Unit, Oakland, Alameda County, California and at the U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay, Samoa, Humboldt County, California.

C. Interviews

Ward Hill, architectural historian, communicated by email March 17, 2009 and November 4-5, 2009 with Dr. Daniel Koski-Karell, Historian's Office, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C. regarding the architecture of Coast Guard Life Saving Stations and the design of marine railways. Mr. Hill also met with Ms. Karen Welsh, archivist at the U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay on March 4, 2009. Mr. Hill interviewed Mr. Colin MacKenzie, Director of the Nautical Research Centre, Petaluma, California and the noted maritime historian Mr. Ralph Shanks, Novato, California on October 22, 2009 and December 14, 2009. Mr. Hill interviewed Mr. Gordon White, historic architect with the Pt. Reyes National Seashore, October 30, 2009, regarding the marine railway reconstructed at the former Coast Guard Station in Pt. Reyes National Seashore. Mr. Hill interviewed Mr. Timothy R. Dring, a noted historian of Coast Guard coastal rescue craft, on November 16, 2009.

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E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

Additional sources regarding the history of the Humboldt Bay Station may be at the U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, Washington, D.C. and the National Archives, College Park, Maryland. Additional sources for research on shipping and navigation on Humboldt Bay are located at the Humboldt County Historical Society Archives, Eureka, California; Humboldt Room, Humboldt State University Main Library, Arcata, California; and, the J. Porter Shaw Library, San Francisco National Historical Park, San Francisco, California.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This Historic American Building Survey of the U.S. Coast Guard Station Humboldt Bay and Marine Railway was undertaken by the Department of Homeland Security, United States Coast Guard, Civil Engineering Unit, Oakland, Alameda County, California as part of the U.S. Coast Guard's historic preservation responsibilities under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 470; as amended through 1992).

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PLANS (Original Plans1936), con't
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PLANS (Original Plans1936), con't
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PLAN 29/29	Launchway Plan & Elevation – Humboldt Bay Station, 12th District, Eureka, Calif. U.S. Coast Guard Civil Engineer's Office, Washington, D.C.

Figure 1: Project Location

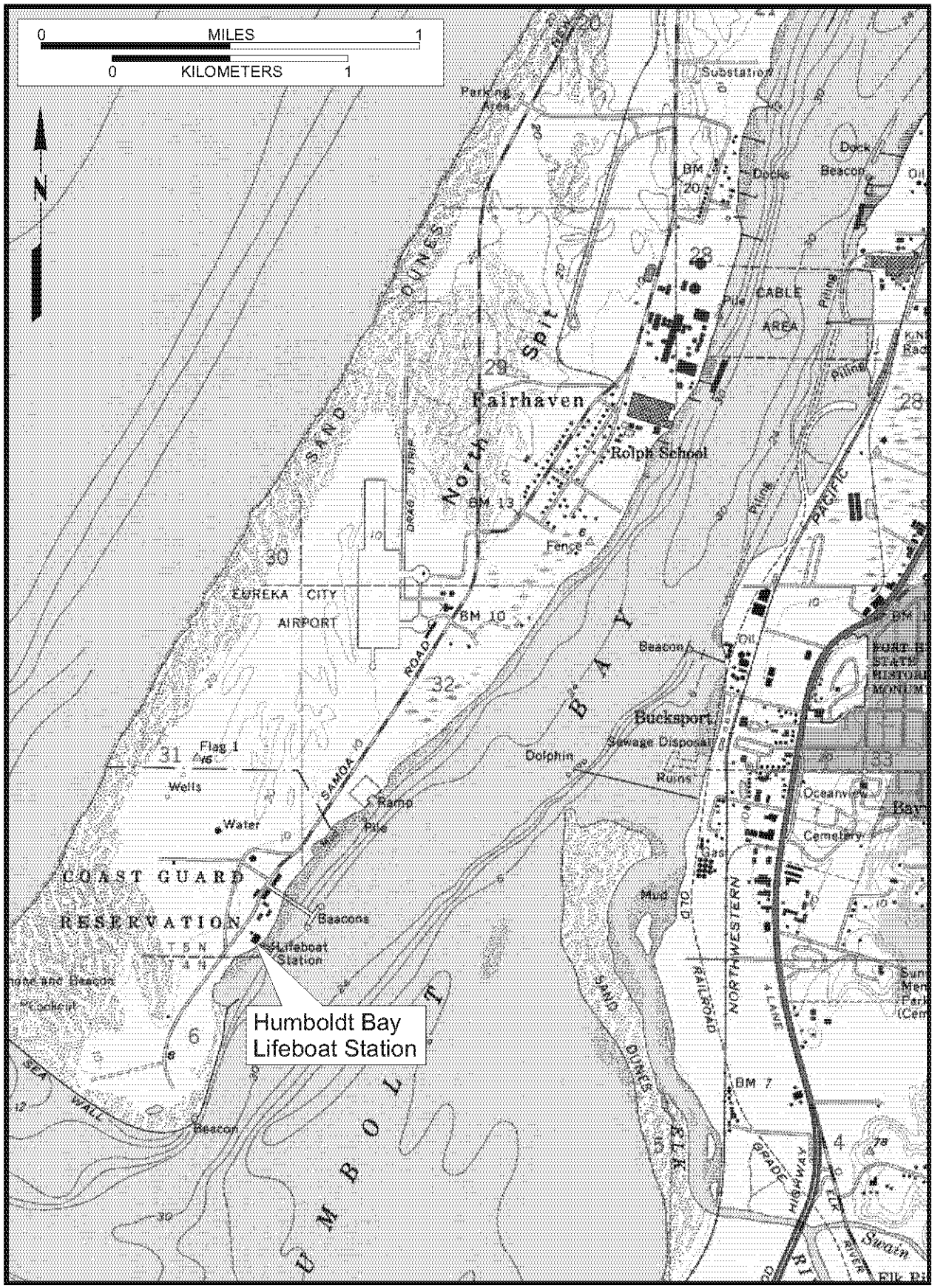

Figure 2: Project Location (USGS Eureka, Calif. 1972)

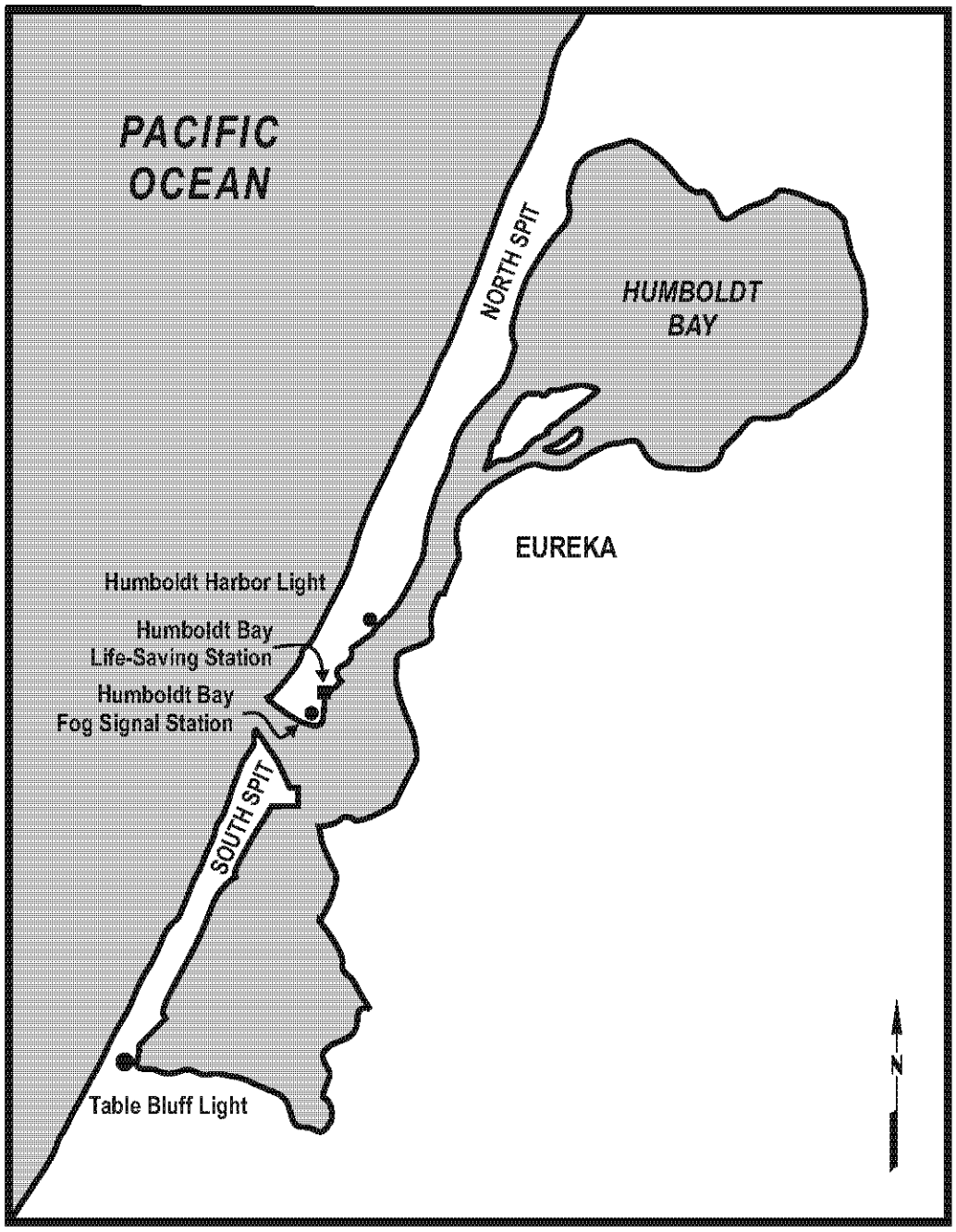

Figure 3: Location of Humboldt Bay Coast Guard Facilities